

PROPOSED (THE) NEW ASYLUM xxx

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THE PROPOSED
NEW ASYLUM,
FOR
INSANE CRIMINALS.

EDITORIAL OPINIONS OF THE PRESS.



Editorial Opinions of the Press.

STATE CHARITIES AID ASSOCIATION, }
21 UNIVERSITY PLACE, }
NEW YORK, 19th March, 1887. }

At a regular meeting of the State Charities Aid Association, held at No. 21 University Place, in the City of New York, it was unanimously

Resolved, That this Association recognizes the want of a separate asylum for the care and custody of the insane criminals of the state, and recommend the immediate passage by the Legislature of an act making adequate appropriation and provision for the establishment of such an asylum upon farm lands removed from the state prison at Auburn.

A copy from the minutes.

WYLLYS HODGES, Secretary.

Albany Argus, March 22, 1887.

The bill providing for a new asylum for insane criminals, now before the committee of ways and means of the assembly, is one that should command the earnest attention of the legislature. The report of Drs. Stephen Smith, C. F. MacDonald and Comptroller Chapin, the committee appointed to look into the subject, shows, in the most conclusive manner, the necessity of better provision for the unfortunates now crowded in one of the smaller buildings attached to Auburn prison. The bill accompanying the report is based upon the following recommendation: "In view of the fact that the capacity of the asylum is already overtaxed to a degree that imperils the health and lives of both patients and employes, and the further fact that it will require at least a year or more from the time of commencement to the completion and occupancy of a new structure, the commissioners would earnestly urge upon the attention of the legislature the importance of immediate action looking to the relief of the institution in the direction indicated." The high character and eminent fitness of the gentlemen comprising the commission, to give the subject all the attention it demanded, lend additional importance to the bill in question.

A BADLY CROWDED ASYLUM—INCREASE IN THE CRIMINAL INSANE.

New York Daily Tribune, March 25, 1887.

ALBANY, March 24.—An effort will be made this week by the state prison authorities to get the legislature to take favorable action on the

report of the commission appointed to determine the best method of providing additional accommodations for the state insane criminals. The need for action is so urgent that unless additional accommodations are provided soon, some of these criminals will have to be set at large. The asylum for insane criminals is at Auburn and is connected with the state prison there. It was established in 1857 in order to provide a place for insane convicts and in obedience to the demands of physicians and others for a place to send the criminal insane so that the inmates of the ordinary asylums should not be obliged to associate with them. The present building was put up by the state prison inspectors with an intention of accommodating only sixty-four patients and these to be all men. Its structural arrangements were those of a prison rather than an insane asylum. An addition was made in 1874, providing accommodations altogether for 140 patients. The present number of inmates is between two and three hundred, and there are a large number awaiting admission. There are now two patients in nearly every room, and extra beds are placed in the ward corridors nightly. The space for attendants and other necessary employes is ridiculously inadequate. Overcrowding is an evil, the consequences of which are to be dreaded in any asylum and doubly so in this institution where there is such a large proportion of patients who are subject to homicidal and other dangerous tendencies. Dr. Carlos F. MacDonald, the well-known expert, who is the medical superintendent of this asylum, speaking of the matter recently, said :

"I am in a constant state of apprehension lest a homicide may occur ; and if relief be not promptly granted, we shall have to notify the state prisons, penitentiaries, state reformatory and the other state asylums, from all of which institutions we receive patients, that no more can be received, except as vacancies may occur. This is a state of affairs which ought not to exist, but the difficulty is to get the public and legislators interested in the matter."

Superintendent Baker called the attention of the legislature last year to the matter, and Dr. Smith, president of the state board of health, Controller Chapin and Dr. MacDonald were appointed a commission to report on the matter. They have made a report urging the immediate purchase of a farm and the erection of buildings on it for the accommodation of the criminal insane. They strongly condemn the present building as wholly inadequate and badly located, being in the immediate vicinity of three railways and of numerous manufacturing establishments. Dr. MacDonald has experimented with good results by sending some patients out in the care of keepers to work on farms, and this method of employing the insane is warmly commended. The urgent need of a new building and the advisability of purchasing a farm, as recommended in the commission's report, has also been strengthened by letters from the state commissioner in lunacy, the president of the Prison Association, president of the state board of charities, the State Charities Aid Association and asylum and prison officials in general. The expense will be about \$300,000. The present building can be used for a female prison, and it will be needed for that purpose, as there are over eighty women convicts belonging to the state in the New York city penitentiary alone, while the state is paying Kings and other counties also for the care of such convicts.

The need of action by the legislature is very great, and Superintendent Baker is anxious that the public should understand that the responsibility for the failure to act will not be upon his shoulders, as the legislature has all necessary information.

EDITORIAL.

From the New York Daily Tribune, March 27, 1887.

The need of additional accommodations for insane criminals in the asylum at Auburn is so pressing that the legislature would assume a serious responsibility in not passing the bill recommended by the commission which it created to report on the subject. The present overcrowded condition of the asylum, is very discreditable to the state. The number of inmates is over 30 per cent in excess of the accommodations, and the corridors are nightly filled with cots. Superintendent MacDonald, who has a high standing as an insanity expert, says there is danger of serious results from this condition of affairs. Of course, the proper care, classification and treatment of the insane is impossible under such conditions. The legislative commission, the state commissioner in lunacy and the officials of the state board of charities and of the asylums and prisons in general, urge the passage of the bill now before the legislature. It involves a comparatively small appropriation, but the legislature cannot afford to delay the matter on that account.

AN ASYLUM WANTED FOR THE CRIMINAL INSANE.

Brooklyn Daily Eagle, March 26, 1887.

The report of the Commission on better provision for insane criminals, which has been printed and laid before the Legislature, is a document which discloses a condition of affairs which ought not to be permitted to exist in the great State of New York. The Commission comprises Controller Alfred C. Chapin, Dr. Stephen Smith, the State Commissioner in Lunacy, and Dr. Carlos F. MacDonald, Superintendent of the Asylum for Insane Criminals at Auburn. Prior to 1855 insane convicts were either detained in prison or sent to the State Lunatic Asylum at Utica, but by an act of the Legislature passed in April of that year the Board of State Prison Inspectors was authorized to make suitable provision in one of the State prisons for the safe keeping and proper care of insane convicts. Under this act, in 1857, the State Prison Inspectors proceeded to erect on the premises of the Auburn Prison a building designed to accommodate sixty-four male patients. This building was enlarged by the addition of a wing in 1874, with accommodation for eighty patients, making its total capacity 144. The present number of inmates is 210, or 46 per cent. in excess of the accommodation. In other words, the asylum contains sixty-six more patients than it has room for, so that it is necessary in numerous instances to compel two patients to sleep in rooms that were designed for but one and to place twelve in associate dormitories the proper capacity of which is but eight, besides placing extra beds in the ward corridors nightly. This is very prejudicial to the health of the patients as well as of those who have charge of them and likewise greatly disturbs the order and discipline of the house. It imposes upon the officers innumerable perplexing anxieties and responsibilities to which they ought not to be subjected. Overcrowding, as the Commissioners truly say, is an evil, the consequences of which are to be dreaded in any asylum and doubly so in this institution, where there is such a large proportion of patients who are

subject to homicidal and other dangerous tendencies. They think that in order to meet a recent act of the Legislature which provides for the transfer of criminal lunatics from other State asylums, it is absolutely necessary that the accommodations for insane criminals should be increased to at least 450 at the earliest possible day. Unless this is done it is evident that further admissions must soon be discontinued. They also consider the present location of the Asylum objectionable, being in the middle of a city, close to three railroads, and affording no opportunity for employing the convicts in avocations for which they are fitted. They express their belief that the Asylum should be located on a farm of at least 250 acres, so that the patients can be kept at work. These views are sound and reasonable and should commend themselves to the good sense of the members of the Legislature.

The bill which has been drafted to accompany this report authorizes the Commissioners to select and purchase a site which shall contain not to exceed 250 acres of suitable land on which to erect an asylum for insane criminals. The buildings are to be of sufficient size to accommodate 450 patients and to be specially adapted to the wants of the criminal insane. The cost of the land and building is not to exceed \$300,000. That the construction of such a building at once is necessary admits of no doubt, and it is to be hoped that there will be no delay in making provision to supply a want which has been long felt and the need of which is urgent.

ASYLUM FOR INSANE CRIMINALS.

Utica Morning Herald, March 17.

By an act of the legislature passed in 1886, a commission was appointed, consisting of Dr. Stephen Smith, state commissioner in lunacy, Alfred C. Chapin, state comptroller, and Dr. C. F. MacDonald, medical superintendent of the state asylum for insane criminals at Auburn, to report on better provision for the insane criminals of the state. Hitherto these criminals have been cared for in what is nothing more than an annex to the state prison at Auburn, since it is on the prison grounds, and is intimately connected with it. The building is entirely too small to accommodate this class of criminals, being built to hold only 140 at the most, but having at the present time 210 patients within its walls. The pressing need of larger accommodations has long been felt and the gentlemen appointed on this commission issue a report which should be acted upon at once by the legislature.

After examining all the points in the case, they come to the conclusion that a new building should be erected, on a farm of 150 to 250 acres, and capable of holding at least 450 inmates. They discourage entirely the idea of placing the building where it will be regarded as a part of the state prison. They believe in the restorative influence of agricultural labor, and they believe that the institution can, by means of the work of its patients, be made partly to pay its way. They suggest that the present building can be used as a state prison for convict women, or possibly might be needed for offices for the prison at Auburn. At all events, the over-crowding of inmates sent there from all over the state is injurious not only to their health, but to the conditions necessary to restore them

to a sound mind. The commissioners are also of the opinion that the insane whose terms of sentence have expired, should not be discharged unless their restoration has been brought about. Such patients are now often sent to the county house asylums, and sometimes even to the state asylums, at Utica, and elsewhere, where they are brought into contact with non-criminal lunatics, and their presence is "obnoxious and demoralizing to the more respectable lunatics." This is a correct view of the case, as all thinking persons must admit. No one who is unfortunate enough to have friends in these asylums would be willing to have them associate with the viciously insane, who have spent a term of sentence in an institution filled with criminals.

The bill drawn by the commissioners asks for an appropriation not to exceed \$300,000, to buy the farm and to erect the necessary buildings. As it will require at least a year from the time the buildings are commenced before it can be occupied, there is need that the legislature should pass the bill at once. The longer the time that elapses, the worse will become the crowded condition of the annex at Auburn. Moreover, every month some of these patients are being discharged at the expiration of their sentence, to be carried off to some of the state or county asylums. Here they are again discharged sometimes, but only to commit fresh crimes and cost the people of the state more money to try them and send them back. It is certainly wiser to spend the money in measures to overcome their disease and render them useful members of society. The bill is deserving of immediate action; and inasmuch as the commission was created by the legislature, that body should have faith in the wisdom of its recommendations.

AN ASYLUM FOR INSANE CRIMINALS.

Buffalo Commercial Advertiser, March 18, 1887.

We have before us the report of the commission appointed by the last legislature to consider the necessity for better provision for the insane criminals of the state. The commission consisted of the Hon. Alfred C. Chapin, state comptroller; Dr. Stephen Smith, state commissioner in lunacy, and Dr. Carlos F. MacDonald, superintendent of the state asylum for insane criminals. It gives a review of the provision made by the state for this class of the insane, and points out the need of further action in their behalf.

In 1855, the state of New York first erected an asylum for insane *convicts* to accommodate 64 patients. In 1869, the scope and title of the institution was changed to that of "State Asylum for Insane Criminals," thus legalizing the reception of all such patients as had committed a criminal act, and allowing their transfer from the various state asylums in which they are confined. This act so increased the number to be provided for that in 1874 an addition was made to the institution to accommodate 80 more patients, or 140 in all. This number has increased until at the present time there are 210 inmates, an excess of more than 30 per cent, beyond the proper capacity. This excessive over-crowding is especially unfortunate with the dangerous class of lunatics. There are other serious disadvantages which should be overcome. The asylum is located within the grounds of the state prison at Auburn, and is practically under prison

management. There is no land connected with it and from its being in the city of Auburn no possibility of securing any. The men patients, who constitute the larger share of its inmates, have no opportunity for labor to assist in their own support, or to gain needed occupation or proper exercise.

These, in condensed form, are the arguments upon which the commission base the bill accompanying their report. This bill provides for the purchase of a tract of land sufficient to furnish employment for the patients and the erection thereon of an asylum for their use. They propose to utilize the present structure for women convicts, of whom those now supported at the expense of the state, in the penitentiaries of New York and Kings counties, there is a sufficient number to nearly fill the capacity of the institution.

The whole subject is one of great importance and should receive the careful attention of the Legislature. The high standing of the gentlemen, composing the commission and the force of their argument, go far toward convincing the unprejudiced observer, of the justice of their plea for legislative action, for the better provision for the criminal insane.

From Springfield, (Mass.), Republican, March 26, 1887.

The condition of affairs at the Auburn asylum for insane criminals, if reports are true, is a disgrace to the Empire state. Quarters originally intended to accommodate 140 patients are made to do service for nearly twice that number. There are two patients in nearly every room, and extra beds are placed nightly in ward corridors. Considering the fact that a large number of these patients are subject to homicidal tendencies, the present situation is a source of constant danger. The matter of providing additional accommodations is now before the Legislature.

TOO MANY INSANE.

New York Sunday News, March 27, 1887.

The demand for more accommodations for the insane in the State Asylum at Auburn, is another evidence of the increasing burden on society. The asylum in Auburn is intended to accommodate only the criminal insane. It was built for sixty-five patients and now has between two and three hundred. It is in a shamefully overcrowded condition, there being two inmates in each room, and the corridors being filled nightly with cots. Dr. Carlos F. MacDonald, the medical superintendent, has had to refuse any more patients, while he reports great danger from the present overcrowded condition of the asylum.

PROPOSED NEW ASYLUM FOR INSANE CRIMINALS.

From Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease, April Number.

We learn that a bill for the better provision of insane criminals is now before the committee on ways and means of the assembly at Albany.

While considerable progress has been made toward the more successful treatment of our ordinary lunatics in state asylums and private institutions, the criminal insane (and how many of them are criminal because of their insanity?) have not been properly provided for in this or any other state as far as we know. The asylum at Auburn has done pioneer work in this direction, but the report prepared by Drs. Stephen Smith, C. F. MacDonald and State Comptroller A. C. Chapin, has convinced us that that institution is sorely in need of improved opportunities and better facilities in the way of larger structures and available farm land. At present the proximity of the institution to the prison is decidedly obnoxious, while a lack of proper accommodations and the enforced confinement of a large number of insane within asylum walls, deprive them of healthful exercise and remove the one chance of recovery, which work in the open air so often brings to these unfortunates. We hope, therefore, that the legislature will grant the relief asked for and that it will above all, understand the necessity of supplying opportunity for agricultural work.

The superintendent of the asylum at Auburn is fortunately on the commission. Under his guidance and the watchful eye of Dr. Stephen Smith and Comptroller Chapin we may rest assured that all plans will be ably and conscientiously executed.

THE STATE ASYLUM FOR INSANE CRIMINALS.

From American Journal of Insanity, April, 1887.

The Legislature of 1886 passed an act providing for the appointment of commissioners to determine the best method for enlarging the existing provisions for insane criminals in this state. The commissioners appointed were Dr. Stephen Smith, State Commissioner in Lunacy, Hon. A. C. Chapin, Comptroller, and Dr. C. F. MacDonald, Superintendent of State Asylum for Insane Criminals at Auburn. Their report has been submitted to the present Legislature, and constitutes Assembly Document No. 62.

The Auburn Asylum and that at Ionia, Michigan, are the only institutions of the kind we have in this country as yet; though it is a matter well settled in the minds of all specialists on this subject that ordinary patients should not be associated with insane criminals. Perhaps the fact of association with a state prison has formed a principal obstacle to the more extensive adoption of this plan. At all events, the report before us very convincingly argues for the removal of the institution from all association with the penitentiary and for placing it on a separate and independent footing, as a charitable and not a seemingly penal institution. Especially should this be the case where there are so many instances of persons committed whose crimes, so-called, may be the first evidence of their insanity, who could not be even indicted, much less made convicts, on that account, but who, nevertheless, under a judge's order or a jury's finding, are made proper subjects for such an asylum.

The committee urgently recommend that a new asylum should be erected, at a distance from the present, on a farm of 150 or 200 acres, which would furnish the best means of labor and exercise, from which the patients are now debarred, and that in other respects the treatment

and surroundings should be assimilated to that of the other existing institutions, both for those who on recovery are remanded to the jurisdiction of the courts, or those who on expiration of sentence simply fall into the class of chronic insane.

The report closes with a draft of the proposed law, appropriating \$300,000 for these purposes, which it is to be hoped may be adopted. The accommodation contemplated (for 450 patients), is certainly none too large to meet the proportion of insane in the state, allowing the present building to be relinquished to the sole occupancy of female convicts.

THE CRIMINAL INSANE.

Elmira Daily Advertiser; March 16, 1887.

In one of the smaller buildings attached to the state prison at Auburn, designed for the limited accommodation of 140 patients, are now crowded 210 insane criminals. This inadequate asylum, was opened in 1859, and since that time, 896 patients have been received. To many of our readers, whose attention has not been especially called to the subject, doubtless this statement of the number of insane criminals will be surprising.

Naturally, the question is asked at once, what has become of the 600 or 700 patients, who have been committed to this asylum, but are not now in its care. The majority of them have been transferred, at the expiration of their terms of sentence, to the care of the superintendents of the poor in the counties wherein they were convicted. Thus some of them have found their way of escape, have again indulged in the crimes, for which their special mania gives them predilection, and have again been brought to the state asylum for insane criminals. Others have been sent to county asylums, or state asylums. It is as obviously unjust that the inmates of ordinary asylums, should be compelled to associate with criminals, as it is obviously improper to force insane persons to endure the scanty accommodations, confinement, and monotonously rigorous routine of an ordinary prison. What, then, is to be done with these unfortunate men and women?

Last year a commission, consisting of Dr. Stephen Smith, state commissioner in lunacy, Comptroller Chapin, and Dr. Carlos F. MacDonald, superintendent of the state asylum for insane criminals, was appointed in accordance with an act of the legislature, to determine the best method of providing additional accommodations for this class, decide upon the expediency of providing farming lands for their occupancy and employment, and report to the legislature. This task the commission has performed and its report, recently transmitted, is before us.

Aside from the fact of over-crowding, the commissioners show that the present asylum at Auburn is not able, in many respects, to supply some of the most essential aids in the treatment of the insane. There are no facilities for furnishing suitable employment to those who can work, no opportunity for the right kind of exercise, no facilities for either employment or recreation within doors in bad weather, no adequate accommodations in respect of dormitories, laundry, dining-rooms, ice-house, etc. In short, the asylum at Auburn (made from the material of an abandoned prison building) is wholly inadequate and unsuitable for the work expected of it. The commissioners say it is needed by the prison proper and should be abandoned as an asylum for the insane.

The commissioners urge the necessity of providing a farm whereon patients may work and benefit the state while greatly benefiting themselves. The abundance of fresh air, freedom from the day and night noise of the heart of a city, and from the annoying scrutiny of the curious, exercise, sunlight, and the other concomitants of such a life, supply an environment of the best character for the assistance of the curable and the relief of the incurable.

In accordance with their instructions the commissioners present a bill embodying the plans which they think meet the requirements of the case. It calls for the selection of a site which shall contain not more than 250 acres of suitable land, the construction of a building to accommodate 450 patients and adapted to the requirements of the insane and provides for the appropriation of a sum not exceeding \$300,000 for the purpose of carrying out the law.

The bill is now before the legislature in the hands of the committee of which Mr. Erwin is chairman. It has the approval, it is said, of the state commissioner in lunacy, the president of the state board of charities, prison association, state charities association, superintendent of prisons and all prison and asylum officials who are conversant with the subject. It will undoubtedly become a law, as the necessity of the case is apparent and instincts of humanity as well as considerations of state policy demand that something be done to meet it.

ASYLUM FOR INSANE CRIMINALS.

Albany Daily Press and Knickerbocker, March 24, 1887.

Dr. Carlos F. MacDonald, superintendent of the state asylum for insane criminals, and Dr. Stephen Smith, state commissioner in lunacy, appeared before the ways and means committee on Tuesday in behalf of the bill to establish a new asylum for insane criminals. The bill is based on the report of a commission appointed by the last legislature, consisting of the gentlemen named above, and Comptroller Chapin, to determine the best method of providing additional accommodations and the expediency of purchasing farming lands for the industrial occupation of insane criminals. The commissioners were required to "report the result of their inquiries to the present legislature, together with a bill embodying such plans as will best meet the requirements in the premises." The bill provides for an appropriation of \$300,000, for the purchase of a farm of 250 acres and the erection thereon of suitable buildings to accommodate 450 patients, the work to be done under the direction of the present commissioners, all of whom are state officials of high standing.

The present asylum building is located in contracted quarters on the prison grounds at Auburn. It was erected nearly 30 years ago and is ill-adapted to the present needs, being insecure and destitute of lands for the labor and out-door exercise of the patients, most of whom are males. The population of the institution is now more than 30 per cent in excess of its capacity, and is steadily increasing.

The subject is one of great importance, and the legislature should very promptly grant the relief asked for. The character and ability of the gentlemen comprising the commission is a sufficient guarantee that the work will be faithfully and economically executed.

AN ASYLUM FOR INSANE CRIMINALS.

Albany Times. March 25, 1887.

There is now a bill before the legislature to provide for the erection of a commodious asylum for insane criminals. With a prison population in this state of about 4,000, not counting the population in county penitentiaries, there is only one institution for the treatment of insane criminals in the state, and that was built thirty years ago, so that it is entirely inadequate now. It is indeed an adjunct of the Auburn State Prison and not only is it inadequate in size, but ill-fitted for the purposes of its erection by its location and surroundings. The present bill proposes the erection of an asylum on a site away from city surroundings, on 250 acres of suitable land, at an expenditure not to exceed \$300,000. The location of such an asylum in a country district is one of the requisites of its perfect usefulness. The present inadequate asylum adjoining Auburn prison presents no relief to the mental or the physical worries of the patient. He is in sight and sound of the prison and the clamor of its machinery, and his distorted mind can receive no impressions other than those conveyed by his imprisonment, from which in many cases insanity was induced. There is no opportunity for out-door exercise. There is little more benefit of the blessed air of heaven, than he received in his prison cell or at his prison work-bench. The change is only from the discipline and labor of the penal establishment and the horrors of his convict cell, to possibly a better bed, kindlier attendance, and idleness. In 1883, say the commissioners, the experiment of sending patients out on farms in the vicinity, to work on shares, was tried and successfully carried out. Care was taken to select only such patients as could be relied upon to conduct themselves with propriety, each squad being under the charge of one or more attendants. At one time upwards of thirty patients were thus employed, their labor yielding to the asylum a sufficient amount of corn to fatten thirty swine, and enough husks to fill nearly all the beds; also about half the quantity of potatoes and all the turnips required for the following winter. While no money consideration was asked or received for the labor, the asylum was undoubtedly pecuniarily benefited thereby, in the matter of supplies obtained; but this was regarded as of secondary importance in comparison with the marked benefit, mentally and physically, which the patients derived from being thus pleasantly and usefully occupied. In fact, a noticeable improvement was observed in the condition of every patient sent out: and in two instances in which a recovery was not anticipated, complete recovery ensued.

The benefits which resulted from such experiments were, however, secured at the cost of much embarrassment and trouble, for it is not an easy matter to take care of large squads of insane people, even where they are not viciously inclined, and the draft on the operating force of the regular asylum must have been too great. With the new building, erected as other asylums are in the open country, with farm lands attached, the daily occupation of nearly all the inmates could be easily carried on in farm labor, where health and revenue would each be forwarded. A great argument for the employment of the mass of our criminals is that it is humane and necessary to health. To those among them who are insane, the argument of humanity applies with greater force than to the mass of sane criminals.

Moreover, the means of employment for the insane can hardly be extended beyond agricultural labor. It would not be safe, any more than it would be conducive to the health of the patients, to employ them in the operation of machinery, or in the usual manual labor even of shoeing or brush making. The exercise of the body, the breathing of fresh air, the play of the fancy, sometimes the brighter for a mental affliction, the sense of liberty, the charm of a beautiful view, all necessary to the invalid or the insane, would all be lacking, while danger and waste would be imminent at all times. The state can do no more humane act, nor one which would repay the doing in a more beneficent manner, than to erect such a building on such a site as the commission have recommended in their report. The bill ought to pass.

THE PROPOSED ASYLUM FOR INSANE CRIMINALS.

From the Auburn Daily Advertiser, March 22, 1887.

The legislature of last year appointed a commission consisting of Dr. Stephen Smith, state commissioner in lunacy, State Comptroller Chapin, and Dr. C. F. MacDonald, superintendent of the asylum for insane criminals, to determine the best method of providing additional accommodations for, and the expediency of furnishing farming lands for the industrial occupation of insane criminals, the commission to report to the legislature the result of their inquiries, "together with the bill embodying such plans as will best meet the requirements in the premises."

The report of this commission, a copy of which is before us, sets forth in considerable detail the history of the present asylum, which originated in a recognition of the necessity of providing for a separation of the criminal from the non-criminal insane. The first step in this direction was taken by the legislature of 1855, by the enactment of a law requiring the then board of state prison inspectors to make suitable provisions, in one of the state prisons, for the safe keeping and proper care of all the insane convicts then in the state lunatic asylum at Utica. The legislature of 1857 provided twenty thousand dollars to carry out the purposes of this act; but restricted the provision to men only, and directed that insane convict women should be sent to Utica, as heretofore; also that the money should "be expended upon the ground occupied by the state prison at Auburn." It is probable that the legislature, at that time contemplated simply an annex, or insane department, in connection with the prison, and for the accommodation only of male convicts from the state prisons. The original structure, with capacity for about sixty patients, was completed in 1859. An additional wing to accommodate eighty patients was erected in 1874, making a total capacity of one hundred and forty. No more additions have been made to the building, although the scope of the asylum has been greatly extended by subsequent legislation, until the source from whence it receives patients includes the three state prisons, six county penitentiaries, the state reformatory, state house of refuge for women, cases of so called criminal lunatics (persons accused of crime, but acquitted on the ground of insanity,) from all of the state asylums, and the same class of cases from the courts direct. About 900 patients have been admitted from these various sources since the asylum was opened. The present number of inmates is 210, being more than 30 per cent in excess of the proper capacity of the building. We understand that the annual admissions have increased about 200 per cent during the present decade; thus steadily augmenting the average resident popula-

tion, in spite of the obviously objectionable practice, to which the superintendent has been compelled to resort, of sending convict patients back to the counties of their convictions as fast as their sentences to penal servitude expired, in order to make room for others of a more violent and dangerous type. Many of the single rooms are now occupied by two patients while eight bed dormitories contain, twelve; it is also necessary to place extra beds in the ward corridors; thus seriously encroaching on the already too limited day room space. Such a condition of affairs—especially among the criminal insane, many of whom are violent and homicidal—with its attendant danger to the health and lives of the inmates and their care-takers, not to mention the added perplexing anxieties and responsibilities imposed upon the officers, is one that urgently calls for immediate relief. The situation imposes upon the legislature a serious and important duty, which it should not hesitate to discharge by promptly passing the bill for relief which is now before it. In fact provision of a properly arranged asylum of sufficient capacity to accommodate all of the criminal insane, and located on a farm of ample acres to afford useful and healthful occupation to its inmates, would seem to be the only reasonable solution of the problem in question.

The present location of the asylum, adjacent to the prison and in a thickly settled part of the city, hedged in by factories, railroads, &c., all of which are disturbing elements, is most unfortunate; while the lack of room for expansion to meet the necessities of its steadily growing population, and the still greater lack of farming lands, the cultivation of which would afford healthful and profitable occupation to its inmates, present serious obstacles to successful treatment which medical skill and executive ability, however well applied, are powerless to overcome. These defects have frequently been pointed out, and suggestions for their relief, as above outlined, made in the respective annual reports of the medical superintendent of the asylum, and state commissioner in lunacy.

The views of the commissioners regarding location, etc., after examining the whole situation, are fully in accord with those held by the *Advertiser*.

The bill accompanying the report authorizes the commissioners to select and purchase a site, which shall contain not to exceed 250 acres of farming land, and to erect thereon the necessary buildings to accommodate 450 patients, and adapted to the requirements of the criminal insane, at a cost of \$300,000. The sum asked for is reasonable, and it is hoped the legislature will not hesitate in granting it.

THE INSANE ASYLUM.

Auburn Bulletin, March 12, 1887.

The report of the commission regarding the State Asylum for Insane Criminals in this city, a very full synopsis of which is printed in another column of this paper, will prove very interesting reading. The facts it states about the present insufficiency and unsuitableness of the asylum for the purpose to which it is devoted will surprise no one who is acquainted with it and its workings. These have been matters of common talk long enough. The attention of the legislature has been called to them often enough, so that they lack the charm of novelty. The proposition, however, to build a new asylum on a farm, location not named, will prove new to most Auburnians, and the further proposition to create of the present asylum a prison for women convicts will be novel to all. As to the first, it is certainly true that farm work is beneficial to many luna-

tics. If it were not so, the Auburn institution would not be the only of this state's asylums, as we think it is, not provided with one. There is no reason why an insane criminal should not have every advantage for recovering sanity that is given the lunatic who is not also a felon. In such misfortune, no distinction can be justly made between the just and the unjust. As to the second proposition, the state now has nowhere to send its women felons, except to the penitentiaries owned by the counties, where their maintenance is a constant burden, and where they may or may not be properly cared for. There was a time when they were sent to Sing Sing, but that has been done away with from necessity. Why not, in case the first suggestion of the commission is adopted, also adopt the second? Economy and humanity both demand it,

THE CRIMINAL ASYLUM PROJECT.

Auburn Morning Dispatch March 17, 1887.

The report recently submitted to the legislature by the commission on Better Provision for Insane Criminals is of special interest as showing the over-crowded condition of the asylum here. Tracing briefly the history of the asylum from its inception, the report shows that the number to be received and provided for has been constantly increasing. The original structure had accommodations for 64 patients. By the erection of a new wing in 1874 accommodations were provided for 140; but the fact that even prior to that date it was made an asylum for unconvicted criminal lunatics as well as insane convicts, has of course tended to cause a constant influx into it, and by subsequent acts and amendments it has been further made the depository, so to say, for insane cases from all the penal institutions of the state. The present number is 210, "of which," in the language of the report, "118 are from state prisons, nine from county penitentiaries, nine from the state reformatory, 54 from state asylums and 20 from the courts." Thus the asylum population is more than 30 per cent. in excess of the accommodations.

The bill reported by the commission providing for the selection of a farm and the erection thereon of asylum buildings for the insane criminals and convicts, thus naturally commends itself to all who are most familiar with prison and asylum workings. Dr. Carlos F. MacDonald, superintendent of the asylum, Dr. Stephen Smith and Comptroller Chapin, the commissioners, have received gratifying endorsement of their proposition from the state commissioner in lunacy, the president of the state board of charities, the superintendent of state prisons, the State Charities Aid association, the Prison association, all the superintendents of the respective state asylums, and in fact all asylum and prison officers throughout the state at all conversant with the special needs of the insane.

The commission favors the application of the present insane criminal asylum here to the needs of women convicts. The advantage of proper provision for this class is too evident to need much comment. The transfer of the criminal insane to a farm would be of especial advantage to them as the report plainly shows; the state needs a prison for convict women and would thus have it ready-made, slight alterations only being needed.

The legislature will do well to give the report serious consideration. It is a matter in which the whole state is interested, and that equally, these institutions being in no sense local.

